



NATURAL BEAUTY

7.1 INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS

The natural beauty of Hawaii is a universally recognized characteristic and one of the most significant and valuable assets of this island. In a relatively small area exists a great range of environments, from lush green tropical valleys to snow-capped mountains.

Hawaii's natural and scenic beauty is the result of the interaction of various physical elements and forces. Three primary factors contribute to the variety of environments: elevation, relative location, and geologic origin and age. A further factor is modification by man. The types of landform and vegetation depend on these basic factors. Due to different elevations and locations of the island, the landscape features have particular characteristics. These include barren fields of lava, heavily vegetated valleys, kiawe deserts, native forests, rolling grasslands, and rocky coastlines. The differences in the environment and the landscape features are important in giving identity to areas of the island and enhances the livability of the island by providing a preference of physical settings.

Natural beauty is a multifaceted resource. It is an aesthetic resource experienced by human perceptions. It is an economic resource, as evidenced by the scale of resort development and by visitor-related activities. Real property values further substantiate the economic value of Hawaii's dramatic beauty. The physical elements that make up the landscape and the interrelationships of these elements are also of scientific interest. Investigating and understanding the physical environment are necessary for man to live in harmony with the environment.

As the population increases, the desire to experience natural beauty will continue and may increase. If uncontrolled, the development necessary to accommodate an increasing population as well as resort development could have detrimental effects on the natural beauty of the island. Areas with special amenities of natural beauty have been and will continue to be the focus of pressure for resort development. Present regulatory process provide an assessment of impacts of development projects in order to protect, preserve and restore natural and scenic resources.

Hawaii's natural beauty is both an irreplaceable asset and a part of the public trust. It is fragile and although often enhanced by man can easily be adversely affected. Measures must be taken to insure its protection, both now and in the future, for the enjoyment of Hawaii's residents and visitors.

§7.2: Goals

Through the Zoning and Subdivision codes, and the Special Management Area and shoreline setback regulations, the County of Hawaii has the means to protect the island's natural and scenic beauty as an integral part of the living environment of the island. Safeguards of this valuable asset are a major consideration for any construction or development that may alter, eliminate, or intrude upon it. They are also important so that man-made elements are kept in an aesthetic perspective with the physical surroundings.

The County Arborist Advisory Committee was established to determine guidelines to identify the physical and botanical importance of trees and tree masses on the island. Criteria such as the aesthetic quality, rarity, cultural significance and endemic status are evaluated in designating exceptional trees or tree masses. Preservation for those selected are enacted by County ordinance or regulation.

The Hawaii County Planning Department adopted Rule 17 that implements landscaping requirements. The purpose of the rule is to use landscaping requirements to create screens and buffers from noise, lights, and litter; moderate the visual impact and microclimates of paved parking lots and parked vehicles; enhance the street scape of commercial and industrial areas; and promote ecological and cultural values through landscaping with native and other appropriate plants.

The importance of natural and scenic beauty and its true evaluation as an asset of public trust to be protected for future generations remain with the people of this island. While public planning and regulation are instrumental in achieving the goals set forth for this element, it is public awareness and interest that will maintain the natural beauty of the island of Hawaii.

7.2 GOALS

- (a) Protect, preserve and enhance the quality of areas endowed with natural beauty, including the quality of coastal scenic resources.
- (b) Protect scenic vistas and view planes from becoming obstructed.
- (c) Maximize opportunities for present and future generations to appreciate and enjoy natural and scenic beauty.

7.3 POLICIES

- (a) Increase public pedestrian access opportunities to scenic places and vistas.
- (b) Develop and establish view plane regulations to preserve and enhance views of scenic or prominent landscapes from specific locations, and coastal aesthetic values.
- (c) Maintain a continuing program to identify, acquire and develop viewing sites on the island.

- (d) Access easement to public or private lands that have natural or scenic value shall be provided or acquired for the public.
- (e) Develop standard criteria for natural and scenic beauty as part of design plans.
- (f) Consider structural setback from major thoroughfares and highways and establish development and design guidelines to protect important viewplanes.
- (g) Maintain a continuing program to identify exceptional trees or tree masses.
- (h) Protect the views of areas endowed with natural beauty by carefully considering the effects of proposed construction during all land use reviews.
- (i) Do not allow incompatible construction in areas of natural beauty.

7.4 STANDARDS

The following standards provide guidelines for designating sites and vistas of extraordinary natural beauty that shall be protected.

- (a) Distinctive and identifiable landforms distinguished as landmarks, e.g. Mauna Kea, Waipio Valley.
- (b) Coastline areas of striking contrast , e.g. Laupahoehoe Point.
- (c) Vistas of distinctive features.
- (d) Natural or native vegetation attractive to a particular area.
- (e) Areas that are harmoniously developed and enhanced by man to appear natural.

7.5 DISTRICTS

The following describes the characteristic natural and scenic beauty of the districts of the County of Hawaii. Examples of sites and vistas are listed. The goals, policies, and standards of the element shall set forth the courses of action for sites and vistas of natural beauty.

7.5.1 Puna

Along the coast of Puna district the black sand beaches and tidal ponds are noted features of natural beauty.

The inland areas of Puna are lava land. Major areas of natural beauty are the 1960 Kapoho and the Pu'u O'o volcanic regions. The region is significant in that it represents the force of nature in altering the landscape feature into a cone and desolate field of lava.

A portion of the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park is also located within this district.